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A Christ-Reflecting Church

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a purpose; that you may declare the perfections of Him who called you from darkness into His wonderful light." - 1 Peter 2:9 - Diaglott.

WITH THE First Advent of Jesus a wonderful light came into this darkened world -- a light of divine love seeking the lost amid all the discords sin had brought into human experience. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." True, the light shone in a darkness that failed to comprehend it, yet there came to men and women of receptive mind a great illumination which has since spread its rays into earth's remotest bounds, gathering from all nations according to God's will and foreknowledge "a people for a purpose."

Of Himself Jesus said, "I am the light of the world," and of those to whom His light was imparted, He also said, "Ye are the light of the world, a city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." (John 8:12; Matt. 5:14.) It is evident from these texts that Jesus intended His Church to become, as He was, a reflector of God's character, that His perfections might be revealed through the lips of His people and manifested in their lives. Thus to them the word is spoken, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." - Matt. 5:16.

How was this to be done? In what way could this testimony be made most effective and convincing to others? The answer is found in yet another statement of Jesus, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13:35.) The logic of this is obvious. A message declaring the love of God toward men would surely be discredited by an unbelieving world if it were to fail to make its messengers examples of love for one another. If such a message is seen to fail in uniting its adherents, the world will see no guiding light out of its darkness, behold no panacea for its discords, and feel no influence drawing them toward the Light and Life of men.

When Jesus ascended to the Father's presence, there to appear on behalf of His Church, thereby making possible the sending of His Holy Spirit, He provided twelve chosen Apostles. These were special and inspired witnesses, enlightened in heart, and knowing by experience how the love of Christ can make reflectors of such as received light and life from Him. They possessed a glowing, enthusiastic faith in the message given them to carry to the ends of the earth. They learned that the greatest thing in the world is love. They knew that they had more than a beautiful story to tell abroad. It was a gospel which would prove to be "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16) -- a message of abounding grace, full of potency to regenerate the sinner and glorify the saint; a proclamation of an emancipation from bondage to life, from discord to peace, from innate narrowness to universal sympathy and love. By personal experience these chosen Apostles knew Jesus could take men as He found them in darkness, discord, and selfishness, often in deep degradation, and make them "a holy nation, a people for a purpose," showing forth the praises of our God.

In the divine purpose, that no flesh may glory in God's sight, He has chosen to call, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble," but "base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." (1 Cor. 1:26, 28.) Herein is presented a fact of supreme importance. It has to do not only with God's way in dealing with the "many called" into His wonderful light as an initial experience, but it has everything to do in the life, activities, and association of those who will eventually be the "chosen and faithful." In this reference made by the Apostle to God's calling, let it be kept in mind that none stand in greater need of remembering it than those who consider themselves the called out ones. It matters little if to the world the called appear unwise, weak, base, despised, but it matters much if within the ranks of those claiming to be called into His wonderful light, some dare to count base and despised a saint dear to the heart of God. Every true Christian is dear to God, so dear that it were better that a "millstone were hanged about one's neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea than for him to offend one of these little ones," even though they be out there among the "seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed the knee" to any idol. O soul be on thy guard lest it be asked of thee, "Why persecutest thou Me?"

We turn for a moment from our text to the 17th chapter of John where we find Jesus in prayer. We listen to petitions coming from his loving heart revealing how much He wants His people to witness to the world, and show forth the praises of God. We cannot miss the importance of the unity of His followers for which He asks the Father. We must not overlook the fact that all disciples, immediate and prospective, were in His mind. All are embraced in His thought when He says, "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me." (John 17:23.) Could it be made clearer that the really effective testimony to be given before the world was not to be only the spoken message, but also the practical and outstanding exemplification of Christlike love among themselves? How reasonable and beautiful are all God's ways. Few, comparatively speaking, of the "not many wise called of God throughout the Age, and even to this day, have possessed mental abilities capable of delving into abstruse themes, and intelligently comprehending the ramifications of doctrines, "hard to be understood," or of doing other than accepting such things because of a proper or misplaced confidence in leaders. But the most illiterate one called of God can understand, receive and manifest the unity and love for which Jesus prayed in this prayer, and thereby show to the world "the perfections of Him who called them from darkness into His wonderful light." Truly love is the supreme test.

Harmony with Diversity

This "people for a purpose" have been marked all along by much of diversity. As in nature, so in the higher orders of His creative activity, there is a pleasing diversity. This does not represent discord to God, but rather a harmony with diversity. So it is of Him that "star differeth from star in glory." It is not otherwise with His New Creation. Though there has been, and still must be much of diversity in degrees of understanding among His children, because of the fall affecting some more than others, yet there has always been a group of essential doctrines by which Christian enlightenment and character have been produced, and God glorified in all. Common to all saints has been the great truth, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." On that foundation of faith in the shed blood of Christ, character-changing power has always been realized. On that same foundation, structures of "gold, silver, and precious stones" have been reared for the past nineteen hundred years. In days of old, "as many as touched Him were made perfectly whole," and it is even so today. Christ's healing power has come into every life where the hand of faith has reached out and touched Him in confessed need and in full consecration to Him. None who have thus -come to Christ may be denied the full efficacy of His blood, and of all such the word is true, "He that hath the Son bath life." Henceforth, to the limit of ability to receive, every such one may live "receiving and reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord." All such may have the light of life, share in the same glorious sonship -- "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

There has never been a complete harmony of view on all the letter of truth, and vain the hope of any who think it can be found today and thus the true Church be seen separated from all others. In every active mind, honestly searching the Scriptures, some branch of knowledge is sure to be incomplete, some things much distorted perhaps; yet there has been in every genuine character the spirit of Christ, else such were none of His. A common quality marks them all as brethren in the deeper and permanent unity of the Spirit. Man may think to divide, segregate, and classify according to tenets of faith added to the true fundamentals, but the love of Christ constraineth them -- holds them together in the family of God. A truly wonderful family of sons they are, greatly loved by their Elder Brother, and God is not ashamed to be called their Father. Herein is the meaning of Jesus' words, "By this [family love] shall all men know that ye are My disciples." Such love can persist with fervency in Christ-filled hearts despite some diversity of thought on non-essential points.

God's Best Interpreters

In the Church of Christ, that Body in which we are told there can be "no schism," though there is an inevitable diversity exercised in love, there have been all along outstanding characters. Some have stood on higher plane than others, and thereby been made special benefactors to the many. Such examples, or types of character, have been mainly those who entertained the deep serious convictions concerning the important facts of faith and practice. The greatest of these have been such as had the keenest perceptions of inherent evil; therefore they 'have been the great seekers after that knowledge of God which is eternal life. Some have been men Saddened by the realization that too few really love the Word of God sufficiently to explore As pages beyond the elementary or first principles. All such have been needed by the Church, and no less today than in other days. They are needed **now** to show the way to make love the principle thing, and to teach how to harmonize -what otherwise is made discordant, contrary to God's law of harmony with diversity. Yes, from the lips pouring out the high-priestly prayer of the seventeenth of John, the beatitude comes floating down to us today, "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God." - Matt. 5:9.

In John Bunyan's portrayal of the road to the Celestial City, a place is found for the "House of the Interpreter." And this is no idle fancy; for of a truth the great Body of Christian people have

needed God's interpreters, and much of gratitude is due to all who have filled this important office in the Church. From one of these we quote a line of thought pertinent to our theme. The question is asked. "What manner of people has Christ brought into the world through grace working amid obstructing influences?" The answer to this is worthy of our consideration.

Christians Who Experience Realities

"There is a set of conceptions and experiences by which the Christian character is dominated, and where these are not, there are no Christians." These are, "the seriousness of life, the holiness and love of God, the reality of sin, and salvation from sin by the divine grace in Christ, an inward power imparted for righteousness, a deathless hope -- these are the fundamental conceptions of Christianity, and there are those whose experiences correspond to these conceptions. Or, more truly stated, Christ Himself has presented these as the realities, and the Christians are they who experience these realities. . . . The over towering souls that stand high above the rest, the ones in whom Christ has done most-a noble company they form. . . . In the group of greatest Christians we find men and women of deep and serious heart; not light-minded, but to whom life is full of meaning; who know evil, both in themselves and in the world, with a dreadful sense of its reality; who have discerned the infinite grace that freely saves, and come to know the eternal goodness in the God who loves forever; who know the gladness of deliverance from evil, the brightness of hope and the exhilaration of strong endeavor; who have loved their brethren with a divine affection and labored untiringly for their good; who know the eagerness of high aims, and from whom there has gone forth a warm radiance of blessing as they have moved among men. Children of faith, they have endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

Children of hope, they have been purified even as Christ is pure. Children of love, they have gazed upon God's glory and been changed into the same image. Mark all their imperfections, not denying a single genuine one, and yet we must bear testimony that these Christians have been God's interpreters, a worthy product of Christ's work in the world. Without them, how much poorer would the history of our race have been. . . . All fell short of the perfect ideal, yet in them we know God has accomplished His purpose to make for Himself 'a chosen nation, a people for a purpose.' . . .

"Into this transition time more elements enter than we think. Facts are scrutinized with new zeal, and truth is tested in the crucible. We seek to know the verities, and we are compelled to find out whether we are living together as we ought, and what we owe to one another. Every period is a period of transition, but there never has been one like this. . . .

"Amid these transition developments the Christian people have three things to do. Three things are required of them by the nature of their profession, and in none of these must they be found wanting. The Christian people are called to hold their faith, to open their mind, and to expand their heart. First, to hold their faith. They are called to hold fast their sense of spiritual realities; not to be shaken from confidence in the living God, to be Christlike in tenderness of spirit and heavenliness of mind. . . .

"Next, to open their mind. To believe in the validity of all facts and be willing to go where facts may lead; to accept reconstructions; to let knowledge in, well assured that it will not drive faith out. And while these two works go on, the Christian is called upon to expand his heart, so that brethren will be loved with Christ's own love; to forswear exclusiveness and minister to brethren as Jesus did.

"By holding to their faith is not meant holding to their opinions. By faith is meant something far more precious; it means a living sense of spiritual realities. There is so much danger of holding opinions and mistaking them for faith, and being without that sense of reality in God to which alone the noble name of faith belongs. Many fail to open their minds to the Spirit's leadings; hence their very effort to hold to what they call their faith may keep their minds closed against knowledge that no honest mind can permanently refuse." This is certain to hinder the effectiveness of the witness committed to those called into the wonderful light of God.

"Then the Christian must expand in heart. Here we stand in this trying transition time, surrounded by subtle dangers. The attitude of all should be, Help us, brethren, to fulfill our Christian calling. Help us to open our minds. Teach us the truth of the time, and teach it so wisely and in so fair a spirit that we will want to receive what you have to offer us. Do not profess to know that our faith amounts to nothing. Do not claim to be sure that there is no place for our understanding of truth. Forbear to scorn our sense of some great, abiding, spiritual reality, but rather encourage and help us to fill with thoughts of God all space which cannot be left vacant in our hearts without loss. And help us to limit faith to the true field of faith. . . . Help us to expand our hearts in sympathetic love toward all fellow believers. Work with us in the spirit of Jesus: for what better spirit is there for any to have as his own than His? Whoever is at the front of any worthy endeavor, let us all encourage him; and together let us hope that as Christians we may rise to our true character, and be worthy of our Lord."

Terms of Discipleship and Fellowship

From another "interpreter" we gather timely admonition

"The fundamental theory of the Atonement is as follows

"(1) All men -- all of Adam's children -- are sinners.

"(2) None can be reconciled to God without a Redeemer's sacrifice.

"(3) Jesus came into the world to be that sacrifice-and later to apply that ransom-price for the sins of the world.

"(4) On the basis of faith in the Redeemer's work, the believer may consecrate himself to the divine service, in acceptance of the divine invitation, 'Present your bodies a living sacrifice.'

"(5) So doing, the believer may-up to the time of the completion of the elect number-exercise full assurance of faith that his sacrifice will be accepted of the Father; and that he will receive a share of the anointing of the Holy Spirit -- the begetting.

"(6) Such as meet these conditions are to be accepted as brethren in the highest sense of the term. This much would seem to have been always necessary, and more than this we believe is not necessary today. . . .

"Our advice to the Lord's dear people everywhere is that they put no yoke upon each other, beyond the fundamentals specified above-that they otherwise stand free, and leave each other free, and fellowship and agree as much as they can with each other."

True "Interpreters" are these! Doubtless it was advancing years that brought this matured vision. How much such interpretations of fundamental verities have always been needed. Some one has

said, "Are we not formed as notes of music are, for one another, though all dissimilar?" Exactly so! Could we but see the beauty of diversity hidden within God's laws, which may be seen in His creative activity, how quickly many seeming discords would disappear, and instead of that which seems like the thorn there would be seen the myrtle-tree of sweet spices-love, joy, peace. Night is drawing near, the sun is setting in the western sky of life for *many* of us, perhaps for all who will be of God's elect. It is not the noonday sun by which the western sky is painted in gorgeous colors, but by the descending sun. So should it be with us who wait for the long looked for consummation. Surely now "the beauty of the Lord our God upon us" should be seen. There is such a little way to go. Reflections of Christ we should be-epistles in which men may read "the perfections of Him who called us from darkness into His wonderful light." The oneness of the family of God is beautifully real and possible. Christ is not divided. Therefore, brethren, "called of God to be saints," in that oneness, "salute every saint in Christ Jesus," "all the saints salute you." - Phil. 4:21, 22.

The Nightingale and Glow-worm

By WILLIAM COWPER

A nightingale, that all day long
Had cheered a village with his song,
Nor yet at eve his note suspended,
Nor yet when eventide was ended,
Began to feel, as well he might,
The keen demands of appetite;
When, looking eagerly around,
He spied far off, upon the ground,
A something shining in the dark,
And knew the glow-worm by his spark;
So, stooping down from hawthorn top,
He thought to put him in his crop.
The worm, aware of his intent,
Harangued him thus, right eloquent:
"Did you admire my lamp," quoth he,
"As much as I your minstrelsy
You would abhor to do me wrong,
As much as I to spoil your song;
For 'twas the self-same Power Divine
Taught you to sing, and me to shine;
That you with music, I with light,
May beautify and cheer the night."
The songster heard his short oration,
And warbling out his approbation,
Released him, as my story tells,
And found a supper somewhere else.

* * * * *

Hence jarring sectaries may learn
Their real interest to discern;
That brother should not war with brother,
And worry and devour each other;
But sing and shine by sweet consent,
Till life's poor transient night is spent,
Respecting in each other's case
The gifts of nature and of grace.
Those Christians best deserve the name
Who studiously make peace their aim;
Peace, both the duty and the prize
Of him that creeps and him that flies.

The Letter to the Colossians

The Letter to the Colossians Col. 1:3-14

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." - Col. 1:12.

USING A word that means unceasingly, unintermittingly, Paul, after two verses of greeting, assures the brethren of Colosse that, in the proper spirit of gratitude for favors already enjoyed by them, he is "praying always for them." He says, verses 3 and 4, "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints." Paul prays for them not "since" Epaphras, their elder, who is with him in Rome, has brought an unfavorable report of their condition, but, "since" he heard of their "faith in Christ Jesus and **love** to all the saints." Some might be found thus faithfully praying for their brethren when reports had been received of their "going out of the truth," or falling into some other hopeless condition. Paul frequently uses such an expression as this regarding his praying for his brethren. It is never, however, because evil reports have been brought him, but for some such reason as the one given in this case: "Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints." Paul could pray for them "with joy," knowing that (though there were doctrinal differences among them, as all commentators agree) they were escaping the direful state depicted in 1 John 3:14 -- a permanent dwelling place in death because of a love that is "in word" and not "in deed." (1 John 3:18.) Merely talking of love is not enough. A "faithful" Christian lives "the love of Christ." "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren" not because we talk about loving them. Whether or not we have that love should be easy to discover, for "the love of Christ holds us together." (2 Cor. 5:14, Young.) Could a healthy member of the Body of Christ be separated from **any** other member of the Body except on orders from the Head?

"For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the Gospel." - Col. 1:5.

The basis of Paul's thankfulness is "the hope" which was being laid up for them. (See Diaglott.) It takes a lifetime to lay up that hope; but one is not justified in thinking it is "being laid up" except on such evidence as Paul says he has "faith in Christ Jesus and love to all the saints." Perhaps the presence of even these qualities would not have been convincing evidence for the Apostle had he not known of the severe tests they had endured. The hope of these brethren was a safe one on two counts: It was being laid up in heaven; and it was based on the "true word of the **Gospel**" -- as this phrase, a Hebraism, may be translated.

"Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth." - Col. 1:6.

The Diaglott translation properly says this Gospel "is present among" them, the verb being from the same root as "parousia." This Gospel, present among them and also in all the known world, almost entirely by his own activity, was a fruit-bearing message. Evidently the report of Epaphras had been a very good one since the fruit-bearing had been "since the clay" they heard and "personally knew [Rotherham] the true grace of God." This is true "grace," not to merely know of or even to talk fluently about the truth, but to "personally know"-to live the truth. The making of this statement was as high a testimonial for Epaphras as for the Class of which he was an elder. Most assuredly Paul would not have accredited the brother's appraisal of the brethren at Colosse

had he not been fully convinced by personal observation that Epaphras was qualified to speak, because he also "personally" knew not only the truth, but also its great Giver.

"As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit." - Col. 1:7-8.

It is probable Paul had not known Epaphras long, but better than mere words his faithful service to the Apostle in his prison-home had "manifested" (Darby), not merely "declared" their "love in the spirit." This dear fellow-servant had evidently "kept his plighted faith" with his Lord, as he had with the Class.

Paul's Petition

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." - Col. 1:9.

Paul continues the prayer, but to his thanksgiving he now adds his plea that further attainments may be theirs. Appreciation of present blessings must never lessen the endeavor to reach higher goals. In fact a failure to strive for higher attainments proves unreal the professed appreciation. From the day the writer was told of the love and faith of the Class at Colosse, he has never ceased (the aorist here used would imply) to pray for them and to "earnestly ask" that they might be filled to the flood stage (Greek) with the exact, personal, full, clear, precise, and correct knowledge of God's will. Not in the "wisdom of this world" is this to be found, but in "spiritual wisdom and understanding." Paul prays (Thayer says that the thought of demanding is prominent in the word)- that they may have "all spiritual wisdom and understanding."

"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." - Col. 1:10.

It is not surprising to find the Apostle praying that the Colossian brethren might be filled with the exact knowledge of our Heavenly Father's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, when we note that his hope for them is that they "might walk **worthy of the Lord** unto all pleasing" -- the loftiest possible of purposes. It is manifest that this is not a walk according to the flesh, and that the works alluded to as part of the fruitfulness of this walk are not dependent on fleshly ability for their acceptableness. Nor is it surprising that the Apostle should in this connection exhort to an endless increasing of their exact, personal knowledge of God. No true Christian will cease his striving for a more nearly complete knowledge of God as long as God is willing to reveal more of Himself. As long as there is one verse not yet fully understood in that blessed Book that reveals Him, that Christian will be a true Bible Student, willing to make unlimited sacrifices that he may discover the key to that verse. It is of the utmost importance that all be made aware of the weight the Apostle places on this matter of knowledge of God -one of the fruitages of a worthy walk based on a complete filling with the knowledge of His will. But note that the knowledge of His will comes first, before the works are accepted as good, before the walk can be worthy, and before we can really have a precise knowledge of God.

Pinnacle of the Apostle's Aspiration

The prayers of the Apostle Paul in his various epistles carry us to the very pinnacle of his aspiration for his brethren. In this one, we have an example of his great ability for concise and complete expression. In few words he gives us in most inspiring language, the goal toward which all must

strive, and a petition which -we may *offer* for all our brethren with the assurance that its answer will bring them the greatest that can possibly be attained.

The Apostle makes no effort to nicely weigh the proportionate values of character growth, Christian activity, and doctrinal development. Each is too important to be relegated to a second place. If his statement here is to be taken, however, as a chronological outline of the Christian life, and so it would seem to us, doctrinal attainment comes first; but he does not overlook cautioning that he does not have reference to an intellectual perception merely, but one that embraces also the moral and spiritual sides of man's complex nature. Out of this there must grow as a stem from the root a "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing," which the Apostle defines as being both fruitful in every good work and continuously adding to one's knowledge of God.

One might have expected the Apostle to end here, for this ideal seems far beyond possibility of attainment in this life. His ambition for these dear brethren would surely have left us doubting whether they or any other brethren could ever realize the fulfillment of it, if the strength sufficient had not also been revealed. When we remember how far into the depths of heathen degradation most of the early Christians had fallen before the Lord laid hold upon them, we recognize that in them there was the greatest demonstration both of need and of the overcoming power of God's spirit.

It is in the following verse, the 11th, the Apostle reveals why he can hope for so much: "Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness." He prays that they might be "strengthened with **all** might." If their eyes could have been opened, as those of the servant of the Prophet of old, to see the angel hosts standing ready at all times to fulfill God's will for them, this might indeed have seemed a sufficient basis for absolute trust. The Apostle, however, does not content himself with a prayer that they might be strengthened with the might of all the angel band, but calls upon a willing Father for the bestowing of all power-a revealing of His mighty arm. Their walk is to be according -to "His glorious power." The literal Greek of this passage is, "according to the power of His glory." Rotherham renders it, "the grasp of His glory." Whether we take this to mean the grasp which Christians may have, the realization they may have of God's glory, or the grasp that that glory has upon them when they do have a glimpse of it, we are probably in neither case far astray from the Apostle's real intent. Every Christian who has found himself increasing in his knowledge of God and approximating more nearly to a precise understanding of His glorious character has always found in this a great source of power.

Is it a heathen world to be conquered, or mountains to be moved, that call for the bestowing of such might -- the perfection of His strength manifesting itself in our weakness? Is it the understanding of the profound secrets of the universe? It is none of these, nor any spectacular attainment. It is merely a manifestation of the Christian walk "unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." Perhaps all who have endured tests of patience and long-suffering will feel that the Apostle was not amiss in asking such preparation for these trials. In the Greek, however, there is a still deeper thought in each word than the English translation gives. One of the lexicons says that the difference of meaning between these words is best seen in their opposites. The word rendered patience is opposed to the spirit of cowardice or despondency, discouragement. Long-suffering has a meaning the opposite of wrath or revenge. Patience is that quality that does not easily succumb under suffering, while long-suffering is the self restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong Both qualities are not only possible, but are surely the possession of every saint before his entering upon the work that will require one hundred years' patience in dealing with repentant sinners and even a thousand years of consideration for sinners who give outward

obedience. Nor need one think that he has learned the necessary lesson until his patient continuance in well doing, his uncomplainingly bearing of evil is manifest "with joyfulness."

The Central Feature of Thanksgiving

Such an attitude toward evil would be unworthy and unprofitable except as the evil is accepted as if it were from the hand of a loving Father. Clouds though rimmed with gold would soon lose their beauty if we did not surely know of the showers of blessing they bear for us. The injuries that men are permitted to inflict, the misunderstandings, the misrepresentations, the injustices, all are accepted joyfully as polishing tools guided by the hand of One who cannot err either as to our need or our endurance. Jewels given the treatment suited to the shaping of chalk would never shine in a coronet. The worthy Christian is to rejoice in being counted worthy to "suffer with Christ," not to complain of "these light afflictions which are but for a moment." "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations. Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (James 1:2-4.) He is not to specify the nature or the severity of the trials through which he is to pass while demonstrating that cheerful endurance necessary to the overcomer. If "our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. 3:5), victory with rejoicing is just as sure for us as is miserable defeat for those who attempt the meeting of these trials in the strength of the human arm. Let us lay our poor selves, "our bodies, a living sacrifice" at His feet to be in Him "acceptable" sacrifices of thanksgiving. "With such sacrifices God is well pleased."

With the 12th verse of this chapter the Apostle is on the very verge of the central theme of the epistle. Here, as elsewhere, the Apostle bases all present privilege and future hope of heavenly inheritance upon "Christ Jesus and Him crucified."

The mere thought of Him brings thanksgiving to the lips of the Apostle, and the central feature of that thanksgiving is the Christian's acceptableness in the Beloved, the One "which bath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." This spirit of thankfulness is one of the essential features of the worthy walk which Paul has been discussing. The Apostle's thankfulness is not based on his undoubted talents, or his unusual education, nor even upon the "visions more abundant than they all." In Christ Jesus he has been made acceptable because he is repentant, is humbled to a willingness to accept the proffered mercy, and is strong in the faith that no weakness is of such degree but that God's power and strength may be made manifest in it. (2 Cor. 12:9.) The phrase, "bath made us meet," being in the present tense, indicates that Paul is not looking down to the time of a future inheritance, when we will be presented "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing," but he is talking of our present blessings, and of the marvelous favor that is ours of now being "acceptable in the Beloved."

From the relationship of this passage to the message that first came to Paul on the road to Damascus, when he lay on the ground completely and finally humbled, it seems that those words must still be ringing in his ears: "I send thee to the Gentiles, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God that they might receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them which are sanctified." Each phrase of that first message is re-echoed here. The "inheritance" of which Paul is here speaking is prefigured by the land of Canaan, which his ancestors had been delivered from Egypt to inherit. This inheritance is not merely a future thing, but the present possession of those who have forsaken the realms of darkness to walk in the way of light. Jesus is represented as the Apostle Paul saw Him on that first day of his acquaintance, and as the direct opposite in every particular of the Prince of Darkness.

The word "inheritance" does not have the meaning of a possession that came through the death of a predecessor, but implies possession by lot. Israel did not receive Canaan because of their own qualities, but because of God's favor; not their swords, but His might had won it for them—a fitting figure of the inheritance of the saints in light. One of the primary lessons for the Christian to learn is this one of his own weakness and God's power, his own unworthiness and Christ's merit. Jesus promised, "Because I live ye shall live also"; "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they made be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me. . . . Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given ME, be with Me where I am." (John 14:19; 17:22-24. His Kingdom is always the Kingdom of light and life; and He the great Life and Light-Giver: "The life was the light of men." "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 1:4, 9; 8:12.) All this is from His hand, not from our worth: though it is true that it is only "if we endure [patiently with Him], we shall also reign with Him." - 2 Tim. 2:12.

He does not teach us how to deliver ourselves from the power of darkness, but He does teach us to pray: "Deliver us from the evil one"; and here (ver. 13) Paul assures us that it is He that hath delivered us from the power of darkness. The word "delivered" is one that would be used to describe the rescuing of a man from drowning, or the saving of one from illness; but it means, properly, to draw to oneself; and this is definitely the process by which He hath delivered us from the power of darkness. Nor are there any exceptions. All who come to Him were "born in sin and shapen in iniquity." However much any may boast of their righteousness and high standards, all have fallen short of the glory of God and therefore cannot be of His Kingdom except as He has made us meet to be partakers of its light. The process is a familiar one, as illustrated in the common practice of that day, as well as of our own, when a conquered nation was moved bodily from its own land to the one the conqueror had chosen for it.

"He [by the sacrifice on Calvary] hath delivered us [who believed] from the power of darkness and hath transplanted us into the Kingdom of His dear Son."

In all such pilgrimages, in the natural warfare, only a small proportion of those who start on the journey survive to enter the land prepared for them. Perhaps this is another reason for the choosing of this figure. All who are now transplanted into the Kingdom of Light must prove themselves worthy of that light by walking in it, seeking to conform themselves fully to it, walking, so much as in them lieth, "**worthy** of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in **every** good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Only the spirit of thankfulness that is in the Apostle's heart in this prayer can keep one faithful in the testings of this journey—testings that would allure one to the glorifying of the flesh by doing its works, and to the gaining of knowledge for the sake of knowledge, instead of for its intended purpose—that we might walk worthy of our Heavenly Father, He who lives not to receive but to give. To the completion of the journey these must remember their sins, His forgiveness, the blood through which forgiveness is made possible, and the great price which He provided for our redemption.

"Virtue Is Its Own Reward"

A Meditation in the First Psalm

BEFORE we read and consider the first Psalm we wish to offer a few introductory remarks on the whole collection of Psalms. They may be studied from various standpoints. They may be considered merely as literature, in which case it is obvious that they comprise a book of devotion consisting of prayers and praises addressed to God, interspersed with personal and national reminiscences intended to promote the spirit of worship.

They may be viewed as poetry, and then it will be at once apparent that they are mostly lyrics -- poems which lend themselves to music which may be as well sung as recited, or better, and which originally were sung, accompanied by a harp-like, stringed instrument known as a lyre, from which the word lyric is derived.

But while they may be studied with profit from any standpoint, their chief appeal to us lies in the encouragement they lend us in our endeavors to walk worthy of our high calling; in the strength we gain from them to lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us; in the incentive to holy living their continual use affords.

Why the Psalms should afford so mighty a stimulus to holy living is easily realized by those familiar with them and who make them their constant meditation. Not only do they emphasize the importance of character in a remarkably varied and persistently recurring way, but they set us in pursuit of the highest and best, the noblest and grandest, by working upon our hearts, by moving the deepest springs of our desire and endeavor towards truth, holiness, love, and all the virtues and graces we long to possess. "To thy best self be true," is a motto we would each gladly make our very own, but how to accomplish this, even measurably, we are at a loss, sometimes, to discover. In the Psalms we have at least a partial answer to this problem. To use the Psalms devoutly, reverently, is to come into the presence chamber of the All Holy One. They bring us into contact with God in the highest and most spiritual acts of adoration, praise, and prayer. One has only to consider how often the language employed in the Psalms is directly addressed to God Himself, to perceive the extent to which the man who sincerely uses them, who takes them upon his lips, and himself addresses the self-same words to God, thereby commits himself to the most wholesome sentiments of penitence, faith, trust, adoration, love, hunger for God, truth, and holiness; that he thereby places himself under an influence, under a moral compulsion, either to mean what he says, or to desist from saying it, unless, indeed, he would recklessly embark on the repugnant course of daring and flagrant hypocrisy.

Take for example David's own cry for pardon, as found in the fifty-first Psalm. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness, according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." (Psalm 1:1-3.) How, we ask, could any man approach God with these words on his lips, meaning what he says, without being strongly moved to repentance of heart and life? Or how could he constantly make use of the twenty-third Psalm in his private, devotional life, and fail to find it inculcating in him a sense of peace and trust? "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."

An Indirect Method Employed

While there is no question, however, but that the influence of the Psalms on those who use them is ever towards a holier and grander character, it is instructive to observe that they do not accomplish this result directly, but indirectly.

Here and there we find direct exhortations and warnings-exhortations to righteousness, warnings against unrighteousness. Here and there the great theme of the whole collection of Psalms is directly expressed, as for example, in the first Psalm which we shall presently consider. But in the main this is not the method of the Psalmists. No! -- instead of continual exhortation to holy living, instead of stressing the importance of developing a character like to our Lord, a character which we have been called to develop, and which we so greatly desire to possess, of which we are deeply conscious of coming far short--instead of this, the grand mission of the Psalmists seems to be to display and illustrate the character which **Jehovah** already possesses. By concentrating our minds on the surpassing excellency of Jehovah's character the Psalmists knew that they would thereby bring us under an influence which, itself, would transform us. Acting on this principle they set their songs purposely to display before our eyes the wondrous perfections of our God. If only they can get us to continually behold **Him**, they feel, we will need no urging to become like Him. It will be the one all-absorbing passion of our lives.

In extolling God they do so with vigor, never seeming to tire of praising Him. They delight to **overflow** on this ever welcome theme. For example, they pile up epithets of delight and satisfaction in such Psalms as number 18, where we read: "I love Thee, O Jehovah, my strength. Jehovah is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I will take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower." - Psalm 1:1-2.

They echo and re-echo His graciousness, as witness Psalm 146: "Jehovah who executeth justice for the oppressed; who giveth food to the hungry; Jehovah looseth the prisoners; Jehovah openeth the eyes of the blind; Jehovah raiseth up them that are bowed down; Jehovah loveth the righteous; Jehovah preserveth the sojourners; He upholdeth the fatherless and the widow; praise ye Jehovah." (Psalm 103:7-10.) And again, in that very familiar Psalm, number 103: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." - Psalm 1:2-4.

Not only do the Psalmists extol Jehovah's graciousness, but in their view His loving-kindness is not due to any weakness on His part. His character, in their esteem, is weighted with wisdom; it is nerved with moral energy. He not only loves, he hates. He detests cruelty, He abhors hypocrisy. His pity does not blind His judgment. He searches men through and through, and sees them as they are. Those who have loved and served Him, walked in His ways, and then, alas, have sinned against Him, are not seen, in the Psalms, as easily commending themselves to be received back into divine favor. No! Their repentance has to go down to the springs of their life; and their restoration has to be, as it were, a re-creation. Not otherwise can they have given back to them the joy of Jehovah's salvation.

Abba, Father

It would not be true, however, to say that the Psalms properly meet the Christian's **every** spiritual want. As a matter of fact they create a demand greater than they themselves can supply. As the Psalmist poured out his soul to God, as he sought to grow more like Him, he must have longed to call Him "Father," but even though it is foretold of David in the 89th Psalm, verse 26, that one day he should indeed do this, as we read "He [David] shall cry unto Me [Jehovah], 'Thou art my Father, my God and the Rock of my salvation,' " yet he never once does this in the Psalms. He comes close to it. Adoration, admiration, affection, fond comparison-these are ever springing to his lips, ever drawing from his harp or lyre the sweetest of sounds; and yet, as Rotherham has pointed out in his commentary, David's inspired lips never well over with the one decisive child's word in recognition of his father. There is no "Abba, Father," in the Psalms. The spirit of sonship had not yet been bestowed; the Son Himself had not arrived; the relationship of sonship, though foretold, had not been personally perfected. But the Son-the Son of God-has come at length; has personally realized that endearing relationship, has received, first for Himself, and then for us, the spirit of sonship, and so we-now-we cannot desist from the outcry for the utterance of which our inmost heart yearns, as to David's Shield, Sun, She -:)herd, King, even to Jehovah Himself, **we** cry "Abba, Father."

Henceforth the holiness of the Psalms acquires a refinement of moral beauty it never before possessed, because now we view it as illuminated by a Messianic light; and we are moved to its pursuit by a charm, a power, which we gratefully acknowledge as reaching us through the person of our Lord Jesus -- a compelling desire for purity of heart and life we never before knew; a passionate longing for perfection of character along all lines, which has come to us as a result of the death, resurrection and ascension into glory of David's greater Son and Lord, our blessed Redeemer, Christ Jesus.

Relationship of the Psalms to the Law

Holiness of heart and life is, of course, the theme, not of the Psalms only, but of the entire Bible, and this theme received its first expression, in what is commonly called the "Law," that is to say, the Pentateuch, or first five books of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Rising above all other themes contained in the Law is the absolute holiness of God. All the types and shadows emphasize this, the impossibility of fallen man to enter God's holy presence in his unredeemed state being stressed on every page. Even the very compartments of the tabernacle in which He promised to meet with the representative of the people, the High Priest, were designated "Holy" and "Most Holy."

Now, in taking a broad, general view of the Psalms preparatory to studying any one of them, it is helpful to keep in mind the relationship which the Psalms bear to the Law. First we should remember that though the Psalter seems to be but one book, it really consists of five books, five successive collections of poems or hymns, which were given to the world-edited or published -- as we should say, at five periods widely removed from each other. Each of these books closes with a doxology, and is thus divided from that which follows it. By these doxologies we know when one book ends and another begins. In the Revised Version each book is appropriately captioned. The first book was probably published in the reign of Solomon; the second and third not till the time of Hezekiah; the fourth and fifth not till after the captivity in Babylon. So that, instead of being a single book by a single author, published by him in his life time, the Psalter is really a collection of five books of praise to each

of which various authors contributed, and was published at various dates, extending over five or six hundred years. Of this general fact there is no doubt, whatever diversities of opinion may obtain on other facts or on the details of this fact, amongst able students of the Bible. Neither amongst Jewish or Christian writers is there any scholar who denies the Psalter to be five successive collections of Psalms made at different dates, from that of Solomon to that of the return from the Captivity. Indeed, both Jewish and Christian writers have long insisted on the fact that as in the Hebrew Law there are five books, so in the Hebrew Hymn-book there is also a pentateuch, constituting a fivefold songful response to the law that came by Moses.

The First Psalm Strikes the Keynote

This undisputed fact helps us now as we come to the study of the first Psalm. This Psalm has always been regarded as the prologue, preface, or introduction, not only to the first book of the five, but to the whole Psalter. If then the Psalter is a fivefold response to the fivefold Law, what should we naturally expect to be the subject, the theme of the very first Psalm -- the Psalm which introduces all the rest? What but the very Law or the praises of that very Law to which the whole Psalter is a songful response? This is its theme. It sings the happy lot of the man who loves and keeps the divine Law, and contrasts with his happy lot the miserable doom of the man who breaks and scorns that Law. And surely if the Psalter was intended to be a songful response to the Law, and to show us how to make God's Law our songs of delight, no theme could be more appropriate than this. It strikes the keynote, and gives what musicians would call the motif of the grand and complex chorus which follows it in the remaining 149 Psalms.

Let us now read it, taking the translation given in our Authorized Version. It consists of only six verses, and divides itself very simply into two parts, the first treating of the character and reward of the righteous and the second of the character and reward of the wicked. The good man and his fate, the bad man and his fate, in other words, the inevitable issues of moral conduct, this is the subject of the two vivid little word pictures which the Psalmist paints.

'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor standeth in the way of sinners,
Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
But his delight is in the **law** of the Lord;
And in His law doth he meditate day and night.
And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,
That bringeth forth his fruit in his season;
His leaf also shall not wither;
And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

"The ungodly are not so;
But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.
Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous;
But the way of the ungodly shall perish."

First we have the good man. In a simple and engaging manner the Psalmist tells us what such a man avoids, what he delights in, and what he resembles. He avoids the downward course by not beginning it; he delights in Jehovah's law, and shows his pleasure in it by diligent study; and he thereby resembles a tree planted in a spot where it is well watered.

Each of these points is enlarged sufficiently to make it impressive. The man described avoids three things. He does not begin an evil course by taking the advice of those who care not how they live, he does not walk in their counsel, listening for a while to their talk, or watching them at their pleasures; still less does he take his stand once for all among the habitual workers of iniquity; that is, he declines bad men as his companions; and still less does he sit down content with the company of the openly profane; he refuses to form one of a circle who not only work evil, and mock at sin, but who scoff at holiness.

The things he avoids are thus presented in the form of a double climax: worse and worse companions, and more and more submission to their influence. The unprincipled may prepare one for the immoral, and the immoral for the contemptuous; one may take bad advice, then seek bad company, and at last scoff at all goodness. Happy the man who does none of these things. Thrice happy he who has not begun to do them.

Life, however, cannot thrive on negations, on not doing this or that. He that would hate wickedness must love goodness. Now as the law or instruction of Jehovah, the holy and loving God, affords guidance to a good and holy life, it follows that he who would shun evil will take so much pleasure in divine guidance that he will look out for it, learn it, linger over it. And thus we find it in our Psalm. Of the positive side of the good man's character we are told that he delights in the law of Jehovah, and habitually meditates therein day and night. Not only does he withdraw from those whose evil communications might corrupt his good morals; not only does he yield the divine Law an outward deference and respect, but he delights in it after the inward man; it is the food and nourishment of his spirit, as well as the rule of his life. He broods over it **with a love which turns its statutes into his songs**, and lifts his obedience to it into a happy freedom.

Shall not the good man experience good? Yes, says the Psalmist, he shall indeed. He shall be like a tree planted on a bright spot of vegetation on the border of a perennial stream, its roots in the cool, flowing water, its leaves green, its fruit abundant.

Now that is really very beautiful, even to us. The picture is beautiful, we mean, even though we may question if the thought of the Psalmist as to the reward of the good man be true; but to an Oriental, to a man of the East, whose very life often depended on these green oases, with their water, shade, and fruit, the picture would be still more impressive than to us.

Next is described the bad man and his fate. He is "not so"; that is, all that has been affirmed of the good man is denied of him. He does not meditate on the law nor delight in it. He does walk with the wicked, and stand with the sinner, and sit with the scornful. And therefore, he is like the dry withered tree, rather than the tree with water flowing through its roots. Nay, even the dry tree is not dry enough to express his utter fruitlessness, and unworthiness. He is, rather, like the chaff of the mountain threshing-floor, flung up into the air, to be caught and driven away by every passing wind. Because he stands with sinners he does not and cannot stand in the divine judgment; the verdict must go against him. Because he sits with scorners he shall not sit down in the congregation of the righteous, with those true Israelites who compose the family of the Lord. The good man's way is known by the Lord, who is ever on the alert with His watchful care and love; but the bad man's way will perish. The good man will reach his goal at last; the bad man, on the contrary, reaches no goal, his very path, as he advances, crumbles and drops from beneath his feet.

Is the Theme of the Psalm True?

This, then, is the theme of the Psalm, and it must be confessed that the simple, unqualified theory of human life it presents is a very charming one. But surely no man can read it, however much he may admire it, without asking: But is it true? Is it not at best a very partial and imperfect statement of the facts of human life? If we have had any experience of men, we cannot but have seen that the good do not always thrive; the stream often leaves their roots; their leaves often wither; their fruit often fails. We cannot but admit that the bad do not always come to a bad end, an end visibly and confessedly bad, at least in this life; instead of being as chaff, the sport of every wind, they are often so solidly and firmly planted that the very storms which sweep away the hopes of the good, fail to uproot them. And as we compare these indisputable facts with the unhesitating and unqualified assertions of the Psalm, we are sometimes tempted to cry: It is a charming picture, a beautiful dream. Would that it were true! Would that all the chaff were swept from this fair world, by some strong wind of God!

It would certainly be a happy world if only the good were left in it and God were to do them good all the day long. But this is not true today.

Now that it is not true today, in an absolute and unqualified sense, no reasoning person will dispute. Not until the close of the Millennial Age will it be true in the full sense. Nevertheless it does have a very decided application to this present life, and there is no question but that that was the intention of the Psalmist. And we ourselves, if we judge human life fairly, and according to our best convictions, cannot but reach the same conclusions as the Psalmist. We see many exceptions, or many apparent exceptions to the rule, but still we hold it for a rule of life, that goodness thrives, and reaches a good end, while badness languishes, tends to, and actually comes to, a bad end. By neither path do men reach their end at once, or soon. The ungodly, the sinner, and the scorner, may swagger by us, and, with the world, the flesh, and the Devil to help them, they may make a brave show for a time; but if we watch them carefully, we shall see their way perishing behind, and even under their feet.

Furthermore, for a time, the good man, as he sits meditating on the law of the Lord, or delighting to do His will with busy hand and eager foot, may see the world go by him, or hear its laugh of contempt, and feel lonely, hurt, forsaken. But has he lost so very much in losing the company, the smile and approval of the world? Others grow rich, he keeps poor; others win reputation, he remains unknown; but if his character has been really formed by the law in which he studies and delights, if in these brief hours of time he has really laid hold on the life eternal, if he has learned how to smile at every turn of Dame Fortune's wheel, because all changes, whether adverse or prosperous, bring him nearer to God, is he very much to be pitied for his loss? What has he lost after all? He has lost the "chaff," which is the sport of every wind, and which at last the wind of death must carry away. What has he gained? He has gained a place by that stream of living waters which carries life, fertility, fruitfulness, wherever it flows. The man who is sincerely good grows ever better, while the man who is really bad grows ever worse. Goodness tends to life in its highest sense; and badness to death in its saddest sense.

That this may be accepted as truth in a broad, general sense, even in its application to the present life, doubtless we will all agree. And it is probable that there were times when the Psalmist himself, even, felt that his general conclusion must be qualified. Nay, we know that there were such times, for in his other writings we often find him qualifying it, or even seeming to distrust and contradict it. But we should not expect to find the whole truth of God in all its aspects and qualifications compressed into so brief a Psalm as this, or indeed into any single Scripture. It should be enough for us that the Psalm states one aspect of truth in vigorous and attractive forms.

And surely it is truth, that, on the whole, goodness is fruitful, wickedness barren; that goodness tends to life, wickedness to death.

When we take into consideration the next Age, there can be no question as to the truthfulness of the Psalmist's picture. Even if we cannot see that the good, nourished by a living stream, prosper in this world, and are fruitful in proportion to their goodness, we nevertheless believe that in the better country, and through the years of eternity, whatsoever they do will prosper. And this hope we may safely cherish, if conscious of much that is still weak and barren and evil in our nature, we are sincerely aspiring and endeavoring after goodness and usefulness and purity. The hope of a growing goodness and a growing fruitfulness, we **have**, indeed, even now; and amid all that is defective in our present life, we have this great consolation and hope that we look for better things in that better world, in which we are to become what we would be, perfect in holiness, in love, and in all the fruits of love.

The Good of Being Good

But while we may do well to linger much and often on this great consolation and hope, we shall derive our chief benefit from this Psalm, and receive the strongest stimulus to holy living if we realize the broad, general truth it teaches, that character is our true destiny, not the enjoyment of worldly prosperity, and that the development of character takes place here and now. That which is within a man really determines his lot, not the outward circumstances of life. Our experience of life, and of the vast system of things in which we are placed with all of its good and ill, all its happiness and misery, is determined for every man by the kind of life he himself chooses to follow. The life, the whole experience, of the man who delights in the divine law, is very different from that of the man who walks in the counsel of the ungodly, or stands in the way of sinners, or sits in the seat of the scornful. The life of the honest man is very different from that of a rogue; the life of a generous man from that of a man of a mean, miserly disposition; the life of a kind man from that of a selfish man; that of a pure-minded man from that of an impure. Quite apart from the consequences of this life in the world to come, it has consequences here and now which set differences of the most vital kind between man and man. And no confusion ever takes place; the experience which belongs to one kind of man never falls to the lot of another kind; the impure man, for example, never gets the experience of the pure man. There is no flaw, no hitch, in the arrangements by which these different sorts of lives are kept as distinct from each other, as different species of plants are, or different orders of animals. In short, the law which determines what sort of experience-what sort of present life recompense-every man shall have, and which fixes one set of results to one course of action, and another to another, is as constant and invariable as a law of nature; nay, it is itself a law of nature, for it is a law of nature's God. The real differences between men are in the men themselves, not in their fortunes; in their several characters, not in their unlike circumstances.

It is true, then, and it is a truth which no one can question, that, in some good measure, men get the due reward of their deeds even in the present world, in their different experiences of life, in their several capacities of enjoying that which is good in it, and acquiring its best wealth -- wealth of character. The law which metes out their reward to them, since it works in the *very* inmost depths of character, is invariable and universal. We can no more gather a good man's experience from a bad man's life than we can gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles. That law has also this marked characteristic of a law of nature, that working always and everywhere, it also works with the most delicate precision and truth. Among the good on the one hand, among the evil on the other, none even of the nicest shades of character are lost in all the seeming confusion of earthly things; but the meek have their experience, the proud have theirs, the pure have theirs, and the unforgiving and unkind and ungenerous have theirs. In being what he is, whether good or

evil, and irrespective of all that may happen to him hereafter, it has been so decreed by the Eternal God Himself that every man **has** his reward. Every man carries his own fate in his own character. Only as character is changed, purified, sweetened, elevated, whether in this life or the next, can we rise into a happier, and fuller experience of the salvation of God.

In large measure, then, the theology-if it ought not rather to be called the morality-of this Psalm is true; it is verified by the fact that even in the present life justice is in large measure done between man and man; in the fact that as a man is, so his experience of life is; as a man who is insensible to the beauty of nature or art loses much of the charm of life, so a man who is dead to the charms of truth, righteousness, kindness, self-sacrifice, loses the true good and wealth of life, even though he be unconscious of the loss. As the Psalmist himself in another place declares:

"The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. . . . in the keeping **of them there is great reward.**" (Psa. 19:11.) Doubtless there will be a great reward given on the other side, to those who keep God's statutes, but that which the Psalmist would impress upon us is that there is a present reward in the keeping of them.

We shall do well then, to dwell much and often on this particular law of our God. We shall do well to recognize and enforce the fact, insisted on in our Psalm, that our true gains and losses, our real happiness and misery, our substantial wealth and penury, depend on what we are in ourselves. We shall do well to teach our children, and to influence all who come within our circle, to hate that which is evil and to follow that which is good, not only because their choice will determine their future condition, but also because it does and must determine their present state, their use, experience and enjoyment or life in this present world; **because the good of being good is in being good, and not in any outward results; because the evil of being *evil* is in being evil, and not only in the loss and misery it breeds.**

May this fundamental truth, so well expressed in the first Psalm, the truth which underlies the entire Book of Psalms, which is the theme of the Law, and which permeates the entire Scripture, grip our hearts, and may we resolve by God's grace that it shall be written more legibly in our lives than ever before, verified beyond all doubt in our own personal experience. Thus may it be with each one of us, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Trust in God

THE HAPPINESS of the Christian is always in proportion to the sincerity and depth of his trust in God. He may be overwhelmed by affliction, his plans may be thwarted, his good name assailed, his hopes for this world blasted; and yet, if he has an unimpaired, serene, loving trust in God, his peace will be as a river, whose pure depths and strong currents are undisturbed by the things that vex its surface. Nowhere in the Bible is this trust more powerfully and sublimely depicted than in the prayer of Habakkuk: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

The sublime poetry of the Orient is in these words, but they are not too strong to express the feelings of one in any clime or age, whose mind and heart are truly "stayed on God." It is when trouble comes, and all earthly supports fail us, that our faith is put to the test. If then our trust does not fail us, happy indeed are we. Such faith is not too dearly purchased by any earthly calamity or loss, and to many doubtless it never comes through any other process. Any trouble or affliction that brings us near to God, and leads us to cast ourselves unreservedly upon Him as our strength, our providence, and our eternal hope, is a blessing for which we should be profoundly thankful. Such a faith exalts and ennobles all the virtues and graces of humanity, deepens the sources and widens the domain of character, and fits us for the highest usefulness and happiness in any sphere of life. Such a faith gives us power over men to win them from selfish and worldly ways, and bring them to Christ. We may have a creed of unquestioned soundness, and know how to defend it by arguments that no man can impeach; but if we lack the sweetness and light that are born of a pure trust in God, and a sense of intimacy with Him, our influence as Christians will be poor and small.

It is well to preach Christ in our words, but far better to preach Him in our example, and by all the influences that flow out of a character formed upon the model of His life and conduct. The trust in God, of which we speak, will cause our faces to shine and our eyes to glow with a heavenly radiance, and our lives will distill an aroma so pure, that men, taking knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus, will be drawn toward Him by an irresistible attraction. Trust in God is a well-spring of joy and peace in the heart, springing up evermore unto eternal life. Having this divine inheritance, knowing God as He is revealed in Christ Jesus, and having no wild but His, we can appreciate as descriptive of our daily experience, the precious lines of Faber:

"He always wins who sides with God,
To him no chance is lost;
God's will is sweetest to him when
It triumphs at his cost.

"Ill that God blesses is our good,
And unblest good is ill;
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be His dear will.

"When obstacles and trials seem
Like prison walls to be, I do the little I can do,
And leave the rest to Thee.

"I have no cares, O blessed will!
For all my cares are Thine;
I live in triumph, Lord, for Thou
Hast made Thy triumphs mine."

Our hopes have laid hold upon the Rock of Ages, that towers above the flying vapors. Let us then be strong; for our future is not a dim peradventure, nor a vague dream, nor a wish turning itself into a vision, but it is made and certified by Him who is the God of all the past, and of all the present. It is built upon His Word; and the brightest hope of all its brightness, is the enjoyment of more of His presence, and the possession of more of His likeness. That hope is certain. Therefore, let us live in it, and "reach forth unto the things which are before." - Selected.